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The Populist Party in Indiana

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ORIGIN OF POPULISM

The sudden origin and rapid growth of the People's party was a most striking political phenomenon of the period from 1890 to 1896. Beyond a doubt it was the most important third party in the history of American politics up to that time. In 1892 and 1894 the party attained a strength which practically gave it the balance of power. For this reason politicians regarded it with respect and secretly courted it, though publicly as a matter of political policy they affected to hold it in derision. Many of the People's party's demands have since been enacted into law. This fact more than any other testifies to the sincerity and significance of the movement.

The chief cause of the sudden appearance of the People's or Populist party in 1890 and 1891, was the economic conditions of the time. From 1873 to 1893, roughly speaking, the country was in the throes of an industrial crisis.¹ It was a period marked by falling prices and consequent wide-spread discontent, particularly among the agricultural and laboring classes. These classes constituted to a large extent the debtor element upon whom the burden caused by the declining prices fell most heavily. It is obvious that a debt contracted by a producer when prices are high will have practically increased in amount if paid off when prices are low. A \$1,000 debt contracted in \$1.10 wheat is equal to \$1,290 when paid in 85c wheat, provided the cost of producing the wheat remains the same. The average price of wheat during the five years ending in 1883 was \$1.11 a bushel; the average price in the next five years was 81c. In 1885 it was lower in the United States than it had been in forty years. During the decade from 1881 to 1891 there was a general drop in the prices of corn, cotton,

¹ To be distinguished from a monetary crisis. F. W. Taussig, *Principles of Economics*, 400 *seq.*

wool, and live stock estimated at 40 per cent. Between 1884 and 1888 there was an increase of 7 per cent in the number of animals received at the Chicago stock market over the number of animals received in the years from 1880 to 1884; yet the decrease in value was 10% although there had been an increase in population of 22% in the same period.¹ The price of steers in the Chicago stock market in 1884 was \$6.02 a hundred. In the next five years the price steadily went down until in 1889 it reached \$3.95. In the same length of time wheat showed a consistent decline from 95c to 88c, corn 60c to 43c and oats from 36c to 28c. In the Indianapolis market about 1880 wheat was selling around \$1.25. In 1891 it fluctuated between 80c and 90c. In 1890 the prices of wheat and corn due to a short crop were better than for several years, but on the other hand there were times, during the darkest days of 1893 and 1894, when 40c wheat was not uncommon. Under such conditions it was small wonder that thousands became restless and wished for a change.

Naturally the classes affected were not at a loss in fixing to their own satisfaction the cause of their distress. They felt that the main reason for the prevailing low prices was the scarcity of money. According to the quantitative theory of money, the precious metals are commodities just as meat or cotton or corn, and are governed by the same law of supply and demand. Increase the amount of the commodity and it becomes cheaper, that is, cheaper in comparison with other commodities. Since the value of these goods is measured in terms of money, prices rise. On the other hand, let the amount of money in circulation be curtailed, the supply lessened, and money becomes dearer, that is, a given amount of any commodity will not exchange for as much money as before and the prices fall. Holding to this quantitative theory, thinking people saw in the insufficient supply of money the one great cause of the hard times. It was generally believed that lack of money was the deliberate act of self-seeking men who had cornered the money market in order to enhance the value of the precious metals for their own profit. The act of 1873

¹ These facts and figures are taken from W. A. Peffer, *The Farmer's Side*, 21 *seq.*

demonetizing silver¹ by which the normal increase in the money supply was prevented, was dubbed the "crime of '73" and pointed to as clear evidence of this deep-laid plot. Herein lies the necessary relation between the economic phase of the matter and the political. The remedy for the bad state of affairs into which the country had fallen was to be found in the restoration of silver to an equality with gold through free coinage and the issuance of paper money direct from the government.

Many persons also found fault with the way in which the government issued money to the people. By the constitution, "Congress shall have the power to coin money and regulate the value thereof". It was charged that although the government coined the money it turned it over to individuals and corporations to trade in. Both old parties, it was said, had deserted the wise doctrine of finance that money should be issued by the people themselves through their agent, the government. Instead they had turned over the business of issuing money and controlling its volume to a few persons who used their power in their own interest. This was the essence of the farmers' quarrel with the national banks.¹ The farmer objected to the banks because they appeared to him a money monopoly fostered by the government. He would have them abolished as banks of issue and the money issued directly by the government. The whole national banking system was unjust and an unnecessary tax on the people. For one thing, the banks received double interest,—interest on their bank notes when loaned to the people, and interest on the bonds securing their circulation.

Upon the question of interest a great many thinking people held well defined convictions. Interest was looked upon as a destroyer. It was pointed out that money loaned for a number of years at compound interest amounted to more than the profits of ordinary industry in the same length of time. That is, interest charges accumulate faster than the savings of labor. The reason, of course, was that interest rates were

¹ A full discussion of this act presenting both sides of the question is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹ Another grievance lay in the fact that by the law of 1864 establishing the national banks they were not permitted to issue loans on land.

too high. The obvious remedy, therefore, was a decrease in the legal rate. The profits arising through the lending of money, it was contended, should not exceed the profits arising through the expenditure of labor. For instance, if a net profit of 2 per cent is the maximum yielded by farming, that industry cannot afford to pay a higher rate of interest than 2 per cent.¹ Again, it was pointed out that the price of any commodity other than money is constantly changing, unaffected by any arbitrary law. The question then was asked, why are interest rates alone fixed always making necessary the payment by the borrower of the top price?

One great cause of existing evils in society then, it was felt, was the power of money, a power which could be neutralized by increasing the supply of money, taking from it its interest-bearing function to the extent of bringing its value as a profit-bearing investment to the same level with land and labor. The annual net profit on labor and labor's productions was about 3 per cent. Interest on money should be no higher than that.

Besides the financial errors there were other evils pointed out as the cause of the people's distress. It was believed that the operations of speculators were responsible to a certain extent for the low prices of farm products. A bill to prevent such alleged speculation, known as the Butterworth Bill, was introduced into congress, but never enacted into law. Not only food speculators but land speculators also were an anathema in the eyes of the farmers. In fact the prevention of speculation in land was the main object of the Farmers' Alliance organized in Texas in 1875. Alien ownership was especially frowned upon. Another grievance in this connection was the great land monopoly built up by the railroads throughout the south and west by governmental grants.

Since the discontented elements believed that reform was needed because the functions of government had been taken wanted to see those functions brought more under public control. They believed in greater power for the people, especially in the regulation of these industries partaking of the nature of natural monopolies. From this attitude arose their

¹ W. A. Pfeffer, *The Farmer's Side*, 77.

demand for the government regulation and even taking over of the telegraph, telephone, and railroad companies. In regard to the railroads, it was felt that the only way for the people to avoid the high rates charged by the railroads due to their over-capitalization was to own and operate them themselves. To the same attitude may also be traced the advocacy in the latter history of the radical movement of the Initiative and Referendum.

Add to the above mentioned factors the beliefs held by many persons that the two old parties had been insincere in professing friendship for free coinage and poor people in general; that the rich were largely exempt from their share of taxation; that the administration of the government was corrupt and extravagant; and one may form an idea of the elements going to make up the People's party.

The demands of the Populists, particularly in the early stages of the movement, may be summarized under the three heads of land, transportation, and money.

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The way had been prepared for the People's party by various social and quasi-political organizations among the farmers and laborers dating back as far as 1867. This remarkable activity among the two great laboring classes was a distinguishing characteristic of the two decades and a half beginning with 1870. It was what sociologists would call the awakening of class consciousness. The farmers suddenly realized that they had common aims and purposes, and that through organization they possessed a great amount of power. This feeling found expression in the formation of various Granges, Farmers' Alliances, Industrial Unions, Benefit Associations, Agricultural Wheels, etc., in most of the States of the Union. Such associations did not always justify the hopes of their founders and in most cases their political influence was negligible. Yet one or two of them came to exercise a decided influence on the course of events. Originally their aims were of two kinds, social and educational, though many of them were perverted from the original purposes.

The Patrons of Husbandry, known also as the Grange, was the earliest of these associations. Organized in 1867 at Washington, D. C., it was a secret organization, women were admitted on an equality with men, and it was begun primarily for social purposes. Its scope broadened, however, until many of its demands were enacted into law and were the key to the independent parties of the time. It attacked the growing power of the railroads; with their over-capitalization, and exorbitant rates, and its ideas succeeded so well that it has been called "the mother of the Granger legislation." The two principles of this legislation are that transportation belongs to the people, and that congress has the power to regulate it.¹

Next in point of importance, perhaps, was the Farmers' Alliance, organized in Texas in 1875 to prevent the monopolizing of new lands by speculators. It also had a social aim. After absorbing the Farmers' Union of Louisiana, and the Agricultural Wheel of Arkansas it finally became split into two parts, The "Southern" Alliance, and what became known as the "Northern" or National Farmers' Alliance. The latter originated in Illinois in 1877. Unlike the southern wing it was not secret and was more inclined to participate in politics. "Equal rights to all, special privileges to none" was its motto. The official title of the "Southern" Alliance was The National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union.¹

Another agricultural organization strong in Indiana and Illinois particularly was the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association, commonly known as the "F. M. B. A.". Its objects were the same as the other bodies mentioned. It was a secret order and admitted only men. Besides these main bodies there were various minor and local "Alliances", "Unions", and "Wheels" in almost every State.

According to S. J. Buck, an authority on the Granger movement, the origin of the Peoples party is to be found in the St. Louis platform adopted by the "Southern" Alliance and Knights of Labor in 1889.² This famous platform, the basis of the later Populist demands, deserves detailed treat-

¹ The creation of the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1887 was the direct result of its efforts. W. A. Pfeffer, *The Farmer's Side*, 150.

² F. M. Drew in *Political Science Quarterly* for 1891, p. 283.

ment. It is given here with the changes made the next year at the annual meeting of the Alliance at Ocala, Florida :

1. We demand the abolition of national banks. (Also we demand) that the government shall establish sub-treasuries or depositories in the several States (to take their place). The sub-treasuries shall loan money direct to the people at a low rate of interest not to exceed two per cent per annum, on non-perishable farm products, and also upon real estate, with proper limitations upon the quality of land and amount of money. We demand that the amount of the circulating medium be speedily increased to not less than \$50 per capita.

2. We demand that congress shall pass such laws as shall effectually prevent the dealing in futures of all agricultural and mechanical productions; preserving a stringent system of procedure in trials as shall secure the prompt conviction, and imposing such penalties as shall secure the most perfect compliance with the law.

3. We demand the free and unlimited coinage of silver. We condemn the silver bill recently passed by congress.

4. We demand the passage of laws prohibiting the alien ownership of land, and that congress take early steps to devise some plan to obtain all land now owned by aliens and foreign syndicates; and that all lands now held by railroad and other corporations in excess of such as is actually used and needed by them, be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only.

5. Believing in the doctrine of "equal rights to all and special privileges to none," we demand that taxation, national or state, shall not be used to build up one interest or class at the expense of another. We believe that the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people, and hence we demand that all revenues, national, State or county, shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government economically and honestly administered.

6. We demand the most rigid, honest and just State and national control of the means of public communication and transportation, and if this control and supervision does not remove the abuse now existing, we demand the government ownership of such means of communication and transportation.

At the same time that the St. Louis platform was being constructed, the "Northern" Alliance adopted a similar one. It is given here also since it, along with the St. Louis platform proper, served as a model for the leaders in the political campaign of 1890.

Whereas, the farmers of the United States are most in number of any order of citizens, and with the other productive classes have freely given

^a S. J. Buck, *Granger Movement*, 309.

of the blood to found and maintain the nation; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the public land, the heritage of the people, be reserved for actual settlers only, and that measures be taken to prevent aliens from acquiring titles to lands in the United States and territories, and that the law be rigidly enforced against all railroad corporations which have not complied with the terms of their contract, by which they have received large grants of land.

2. We demand the abolition of the national banking system and that the government issue full legal tender money direct to the people in sufficient volume for the requirements of business.

3. We favor the payment of the public debt as rapidly as possible, and we earnestly protest against maintaining any bonds in existence as the basis for the issue of money.

4. We favor a graded income tax, and we also favor a tax on real estate mortgages.

5. We demand economy and retrenchment as far as is consistent with the interests of the people in every department of the government, and we will look with special disfavor upon any increase of the official salaries of our representatives or government employees.

6. We favor such a revision and reduction of the tariff that the taxes may rest as lightly as possible upon productive labor and that its burdens may be upon the luxuries and in a manner that will prevent the accumulation of a United States treasury surplus.

7. The stability of our government depends upon the moral, manual and intellectual training of the young, and we believe in so amending our public school system that the education of our children may inculcate the essential dignity necessary to be a practical help to them in after life.

8. Our railroads should be owned and managed by the government, and be run in the interest of the people upon an actual cash basis.

9. That the government take steps to secure the payment of the debt of the Union and Central Pacific railroads and their branches by foreclosure and sale, and any attempt to extend the time again from the payment of the same beyond its present limit will meet with our most emphatic condemnation.

10. We are in favor of the early completion of a ship canal connecting the Great Lakes with the Gulf of Mexico, and a deep water harbor on the southern coast in view of opening trade relations with the Central and South American states, and we are in favor of national aid to a judicious system of experiments to determine the practicability of irrigation.

11. We sympathize with the just demands of labor of every grade and recognize that many of the evils from which the farming community suffers oppress universal labor, and that therefore producers should unite in a demand for the reform of unjust systems and the repeal of laws that bear unequally upon the people.

12. We favor the Australian system, or some similar system of voting, and ask the enactment of laws regulating the nomination of candidates for public office.

13. We are in favor of the diversification of our productive resources.

14. We (will) favor and assist to office such candidates only as are thoroughly identified with our principles and we will insist on such legislation as shall make them effective.

In January, 1891, at a session of the national order in Omaha, further demands were made as follows: the election of President, Vice-President and the United States Senators by popular vote, restriction of the liquor traffic, woman's suffrage, liberal pensions, passage of the Conger land bill, free and unlimited coinage of silver and the increase of the currency to \$50 per capita. The convention pledged itself to demand "that the government allow us to borrow money from the United States at the same rate of interest as do banks". It was resolved not to affiliate with either the Republican or the Democratic party and a declaration was made in favor of nominating a national ticket in 1892.

Thus by 1890 the forces of discontent had acquired considerable headway. Through the efforts of the Farmer's Alliance, assisted by the labor element, a set of principles had been drawn up in a combination new to the political history of the country. The way was cleared for a new party. There remained the task of harmonizing the discordant elements and welding them into one organization. We shall see how this was accomplished in the years 1890 and 1891.

THE WORK OF THE ALLIANCE AND THE F. M. B. A.

Though 1890 was an "off" year in politics it saw the launching and partial success of the new party in several of the western and southern States. In the western States a number of wet years had caused the farmers to increase the kind and area of cultivation to such an extent that when normal dry weather returned there were many failures and bankruptcies.¹ Especially was this true in Kansas. This fact largely accounts for the more acute development of the People's party movement in Kansas and the west generally than in Indiana.² The latter State, besides being a more eastern and hence a

¹ C. R. Fish, *Development of American Nationality*, 475.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 15; Oct. 26, 1890.

more conservative State, had more uniform and normal crop conditions.

However, a campaign took place characterized by great activity among the members of the various farmers' organizations during the summer and fall. Barbecues, picnics, and rallies galore were held throughout the State, and some excitement prevailed. Speakers such as L. L. Polk, national president of the Farmers' Alliance, and J. H. Allen, of Terre Haute, a local worker, addressed large audiences. In many of the meetings laborers and farmers participated on common ground.¹ There was a great deal of talk of uniting the Knights of Labor and the Alliance, at least to the extent of identical platforms.² Steps were taken toward establishing a radical press. On November 23, a meeting was held at Newcastle to consider the establishment of an official organ for the Alliance. Three thousand subscribers were pledged then and there.³ In many counties the farmers' organization, sometimes acting together, sometimes separately, placed independent tickets in the field. June 7 the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association and The Knights of Labor held a joint convention at Washington, Daviess county, and nominated a full county ticket. The candidates were about equally divided between Democrats and Republicans.⁴ At Fort Wayne on September 11 the Farmers' Alliance and various labor organizations decided to put forth an independent county ticket. The Democrats were said to be making efforts to prevent this action.⁵ In Wells county the F. M. B. A., acting alone, passed resolutions favoring the nomination of a county ticket. At Vincennes it was decided not to put an independent ticket in the field.⁶ These political moves are typical of what was going on in a great or less degree all over the State.

The economic phase of the situation is illustrated by the action taken in several localities against merchants and middlemen in general. One reads of a secret meeting of the farm-

¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 2, 1890.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Dec. 26, 1890.

³ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 24, 1890.

⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 8, 1890.

⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 12, 1890.

⁶ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 10, 1890.

ers held at Martinsville, December 11, for the purpose of organizing a store "run according to their own dictation".¹ The Farmers' Alliance of Vigo county and the people of Terre Haute decided to boycott a Chicago firm selling dressed meat in order to preserve the home market for home producers.² At Tipton, the Alliance took action toward the owning of an elevator. Rumor had it that an Alliance store was to be started by the first of January.³ Many of these projects of course never materialized, but they show the attitude of mind of the agriculturalists and their ideas of the proper remedies for the amelioration of their condition.

The attitude of the two old parties toward the doings of the farmers is significant. The Republicans probably were safer against the effects of the new ferment than the Democrats. The Alliance was strong in the Democratic counties of the State and in such localities was encouraged by the Republican leaders.⁴ The Democratic party, posing as the more progressive party and the especial friend of the farmer, found itself in somewhat of a dilemma as to just what attitude to take. It compromised by maintaining that all the good things in the farmers' demands were already the cardinal principles of the Democratic party, while the points which were not found in the Democratic platform were impractical and visionary. Throughout the period of the People's party the *Indianapolis Journal*, the Republican organ, held to a policy of serene contempt toward the fledgling. The *Sentinel*, the Democratic organ, was more gracious.

Official action looking toward greater solidarity was taken on June 19 on the occasion of the meeting of the Farmers' Convention at Indianapolis.

THE FARMERS' CONVENTION ON JUNE 19, 1890

On June 19, 1890, there met in Indianapolis representatives from the Farmers' Alliance, the F. M. B. A., the Grange, and the other farmers' organizations of the State.

¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Dec. 15, 1890.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Dec. 15, 1890.

³ *Indianapolis Journal*, Dec. 9, 1890.

⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, May 5, 1890.

The meeting was called for the ostensible purpose of founding a State league in the interests of agriculturists. It met in the lecture room of the State Board of Agriculture. The call for the meeting was sent out by J. B. Kingsbury, editor of the *Indiana Farmer*.

Though the aim of the gathering was ostensibly the formation of a State league, the political phase of the situation was paramount. However, the body assumed an equivocal and uncertain attitude on the question of taking independent political action. The general sentiment seemed to be that if political action were taken at all it should be only local. As long as possible the farmers were to work within the old parties, endeavoring to secure the nomination of men who would carry out their ideas. But as one of the resolutions declared:

When the old parties fail to nominate men suitable to the farmers, we deem it our duty, and pledge ourselves to nominate such independently, and will strive by all honorable means to secure their election.

On the other hand we have the words of one of the leaders:

It is not our purpose to tear down, but to promote our own interest. We therefore let politics alone just so far as we are able. The farmers' interests are local, as a rule, and do not interfere with the general principles of the parties. We are a unit on wanting State and county taxes cut in two, but tariff questions do not bother us. We believe with our parties on that subject.¹

(At no time in the history of the People's party did the question of the tariff ever figure prominently.)

A number of resolutions were concurred in by the assembly strongly suggestive of the later pure Populist platforms. Class legislation, monopolies and trusts were denounced. The direct election of United States senators was favored and an unsuccessful attempt was made to amend the resolution by including the President and Vice-President. Another resolution called for the reduction of fees and salaries. In regard to the money question a free coinage bill which was being discussed in the Senate was enthusiastically endorsed. It was demanded also that the legal rate of interest be proportionate to the rate earned by capital when invested in agriculture and other pro-

¹ Indianapolis *Journal*, June 20, 1890.

ductive industries. The passage of the Butterworth bill¹ was favored. Also the exemption of debtors from taxation to the amount of their bona-fide indebtedness was called for. In regard to local matters the convention concurred in resolutions to the effect that school funds should be appropriated according to the enumeration of pupils, that public printing should be let to the lowest bidder and that the political parties place men on their tickets in sympathy with the farmers' interests, the farmers to give them their support regardless of past political ties. When suitable men are not put on the tickets the farmers to take independent action.

In addition the following resolutions were reported by the resolutions committee but recommended to be laid on the table:

That all county and township offices be let to the lowest bidder; that no farmer vote for one who had been a candidate in the old parties; that women stand on the same legal footing with men as executors and in property interests; that county commissioners be restricted in their powers of constructing public buildings by a vote of the people; and that the government should lend its credit to farmers on land at two per cent.

This latter resolution provoked discussion in which it was finally decided that such a provision would be impracticable since "land sharks would buy up all the rocky and swamp land and palm it off on the government by fraud".¹

The liquor question came up when a member of the resolutions committee introduced a plank expressing the views of the Prohibitionists. The Prohibitionist party at this time was third in importance among the parties of the State. Many feared that the introduction of such a resolution would have the effect of identifying the farmers' movement with the Prohibitionists and thus lead to its downfall. After a lively discussion a harmless compromise resolution was adopted and the affair closed.

¹ This bill was aimed against speculation in farm products. It proposed to make illegal all sales for future deliveries except in the case of the farmer who was to be allowed to sell his ungrown crop.

¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 20, 1890.

THE FIRST STATE CONVENTION

The work of the Farmers' convention represented political activity but it was activity within the old parties. The first definite action taken in Indiana toward the fusion of the various radical elements into an independent political organization was when representatives from the Greenbackers, the Union Labor Party, the Farmers' Alliance, the Grangers, the F. M. B. A., and other bodies met in the Criminal courtroom at Indianapolis, on September 23, 1890, for the express purpose of founding a third party.² It may be considered Indiana's first State Convention of the People's party.¹ The gathering was respectable, consisting of about one hundred delegates representing all the congressional districts in the State except the First and Third. It was estimated that probably one-third of the counties of the State were represented. John C. Maugherman of South Bend was elected temporary chairman and J. Y. Demaree temporary secretary. Later all officers were made permanent.²

In starting the organization of the party one of the first cares was in regard to a State central committee. This body was elected and consisted of one member from each congressional district with J. H. Allen of Vigo county as chairman.³

The platform, presented by M. C. Rankin of Terre Haute, chairman of the committee on resolutions, dealt mostly with State issues. The State debt was deplored and greater economy and lower taxes urged. A just and equitable redistricting of the State was demanded and it was urged that a check be placed on the power of county commissioners to heap debt on the corporations under their control. A non-partisan, competent, and permanent management of the State charitable and penal institutions was demanded and disapproval expressed of the existing contract labor law. Furthermore, in the payment of wages to laborers by employers, no property

² *Indianapolis News*, Sept. 23, 1890.

¹ The Republican State convention of 1890 was held on June 10, the Democratic on August 28.

² *Indianapolis News*, Sept. 23, 1890.

³ *Indianapolis News*, Sept. 23, 1890.

was to be exempt. Child labor was vigorously condemned. The assembly declared against the voting of taxes on the people of counties, townships and municipalities for the purpose of raising money to be handed over to corporations for the building of railroads.¹ In regard to the reward of the old soldiers, a subject dealt with freely by both the old parties, the convention declared for per diem service pensions, for the Union ex-prisoner of war pension bill and for the payment of pensions from the date of disability instead of from the date of application.²

The only utterance in the platform on the money question was in connection with the demands concerning pensions. The plank ran as follows:

We favor the issuing of a full legal-tender paper money to meet the disbursements under these bills (pension bills), thereby enabling the government to maintain its honor and pay its debts, and at the same time aid the people by giving them a sufficient volume of money to meet the demand of the legitimate trade interests of the country. Our government paid the soldiers in paper money during the war and the veterans will gladly accept it in payment of their just demands.

Among the lesser resolutions was one recommending that the inspector of mines be a practical miner. Another, that the State furnish school books at cost to the townships, these in turn to distribute them free to the pupils.

The Farmers' Convention held on June 19, 1890, was endorsed.

In the course of its proceedings the convention was addressed by Capt. Thomas Wadsworth of Daviess county, and Moses Hull, of Chicago, one of the original Greenbackers of the country.¹

Following is the ticket nominated by the convention:

Secretary of State, Leroy Templeton, of Benton county; Auditor of State, James M. Johnson, of Daviess county; Treasurer of State, Isaiah N. Miller, of Grant county; Attorney-General, William Patterson ("Green-

¹ This refers to the practice of raising a lump sum by taxation and handing it over practically as a free gift to railroads, factories, etc., in the course of construction by the localities directly benefited by these enterprises. The farmers seem to have objected to this practice only in connection with railroads.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 24, 1890.

back Billy"), of Indianapolis; Clerk of Supreme Court, Benjamin F. Street, of Gibson county; Superintendent of Public Instruction, William Whitney of Delaware county (a member of the Knights of Labor); State Geologist, Edward S. Pope, of Indianapolis; Chief Statistician, John W. Shockley, of Henry county.

No nomination was made for the office of judge of the Supreme court, as no suitable man could be found who resided in the judicial district. Later a nominee was found in the person of John S. Bender.² Another change was made in the ticket by the substitution of the name of Martin V. Kindle for that of Leroy Templeton. After his nomination on the State ticket, Templeton was named for congress by the Democrats and Independents of the Ninth district and withdrew his name in order to make the congressional race.³ It was said that all of the candidates on the ticket were farmers.¹

The political organization which thus entered the field was christened "The People's Party."² The plow and hammer were adopted as the party emblem.

It was charged by the Indianapolis *Journal*, the Republican organ, that Democratic politicians were present in the convention who made strenuous efforts to get their candidates endorsed.³ There is no doubt but that from the start the members of the convention were afraid their organization would be dominated by the Democrats.

The Indianapolis *Sentinel*, the Democratic organ, on the other hand, had this to say:

The whole affair was manipulated by Republican managers. Those who participated are being used only to pull the monopoly chestnuts out of the fire.⁴

¹ Indianapolis *News*, Sept. 23, 1890.

² Appleton's *Annual Encyclopedia* for 1890, p. 440.

³ Indianapolis *News*, Sept. 30, 1890. In the ensuing campaign Templeton received 19,494 votes to his successful opponent's 20,752, losing by only 1,258 votes. Report of Secretary of State, *Documentary Journal*, 1890, Part I.

¹ Indianapolis *News*, Sept. 23, 1890.

² Some of the names proposed before the final one was adopted were "The Farmers' and Laborers' National Party", "The People's Industrial Party", and "The Independent Union Party."

³ Indianapolis *Journal*, Sept. 24, 1890.

⁴ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 24, 1890.

Although only a comparatively short time intervened between the time of their convention and the date of the election, the farmers made a vigorous campaign. The results of the election showed that they had developed unexpected, though still insignificant strength. Martin V. Kindle, the candidate for Secretary of State, polled 17,354 votes and the vote for the other candidates on the ticket ran approximately at that figure. The Prohibitionists, the only other minor party in the field, polled barely twelve thousand.¹

AFTER THE CAMPAIGN

Thus the Populist State campaign of 1890 closed. An indication of what reform measures would be expected of the next legislature is given by the resolution adopted at the annual meeting of the State Farmers' Alliance on November 20. On that date the following resolutions were adopted: That State and county officers be paid salaries in proportion to the business transacted and in accordance with salaries paid for similar services in ordinary business; that debtors be allowed exemption from bona-fide indebtedness; that free gravel roads be placed under the control of district supervisors; that teachers take and report to the trustee the enumeration of their respective districts; that the law giving the county commissioners the power to hold special elections for voting aid to railroads and corporations be repealed; that no one living in an incorporated town be eligible to the office of township trustee.²

On the following day, November 21, a set of resolutions, more general in their scope and more outspoken, was adopted. These resolutions declared in favor of bimetallism and free silver, the abolition of national banks, and the issuance of greenbacks, limited government control of transportation and communication, and the abolition of gambling in food products. They also demanded the revision of the tax laws, and just pensions. The Australian secret ballot,¹ and the

¹ From Report of the Secretary of State, *Documentary Journal*, 1890, Part I.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 21, 1890.

¹ The secret ballot was first put into operation in Indiana in 1890.

graded income tax were endorsed. The liquor traffic was denounced.

Further work of the convention included the adoption of what was known as the North Carolina business-agency plan by which the members were to purchase their agricultural machinery and other supplies through a State agent. The *Alliance Advocate* published in Indianapolis by J. C. Kingsbury, was made the official organ of the organization.²

How closely allied were the demands of the various farmers' organizations is shown by the manifesto issued at a meeting of the F. M. B. A. at Peru, December 17. It asserted that fees in county offices were exorbitant, that the legal rate of interest was too high, and that foreign corporations were drawing vast incomes from the State without taxation. It demanded that assessors list property at its true cash value; that official fees be reduced 10 per cent; that taxes from toll roads, railroads and pipe lines be divided among the various school districts; that a law be enacted permitting debtors to deduct their bona-fide indebtedness from their assessments; that mortgages not reported to the assessor become null and void in the county where recorded; and that county officials hold office for four years only and be ineligible for re-election.¹

Thus the year 1890 saw the attempt of the farmers of the State to unite for independent political action, without destroying at the same time the different farmers' organizations. The next four years were to see the gradual growth of the new party until it reached its zenith as an independent force in politics.

THE YEAR OF ORGANIZATION

The chief characteristic of the year 1891, so far as the People's party was concerned, was the development and perfecting of the party organization.

The picnics, barbecues, and speech-making of the previous

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 22, 1890.

¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Dec. 18, 1890.

year continued.¹ The F. M. B. A. and the Alliance in their meetings throughout the State continued their denunciation of alleged evils in the State and local governments. On January 16 the representatives of the F. M. B. A. held a meeting at Decatur and demanded reform in the Democratic management of the county.² In the *Indianapolis Journal* of January 28, 1891, one learns that at Crawfordsville lodge No. 310 of the Alliance adopted resolutions in regard to fees, salaries, mortgages and terms of office. The question of mortgaged lands was particularly prominent. The demand was reiterated that the mortgagee be exempt from taxation to the amount of his mortgage. The lodge also declared in favor of the principle that notes not listed for taxation be non-collectible.¹ At Saline City, near Brazil, the local F. M. B. A. passed resolutions condemning the liquor traffic. The meeting was secret and other business was not made public, but it was believed that they would place a county and State ticket in the field in the next campaign.² At Peru in December there was a discussion over the starting of a new Alliance paper. It was said that a paper was to be started at Portland the following week.³

In other localities where the members of various farmers' lodges felt that the integrity of their organization was at stake, political action was deplored. For instance at Charleston, Clark county, the F. M. B. A. strongly denounced the politics in the organization.⁴ At a meeting at the Hotel English in Indianapolis, February 2, 1891, with delegates present from Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Illinois Alliances it was brought out that the members had no wish to form a third party. Their organizations, they said, were not political.⁵

Two external forces came in at this time to influence the growth of the People's party, the one adversely, the other

¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 24, 28; Sept. 28, 1891.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Jan. 17, 1891.

³ *Indianapolis Journal*, Jan. 28, 1891.

⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 15, 1891.

⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, Dec. 12, 1891.

⁶ *Indianapolis Journal*, Dec. 17, 1891.

⁷ *Indianapolis Journal*, Feb. 5, 1891.

favorably. These two forces were the crop conditions of 1891 and the action of the Democratic legislature.

The year 1891 was one of unusual agricultural productivity. The corn crop of the State was 125,092,649 bushels, an increase of 43% over the yield of the previous year, and the largest crop with the exception of that of 1888 in a decade. The yield of wheat was 58,305,796 bushels, more than double the amount raised in 1890, and the largest crop since 1881. The production of hay, barley, rye, and oats was normal. The potato crop also was a large one, the largest since 1885.¹ This prosperity naturally checked the reforming zeal of the radicals, though not to any great extent.

The tax law of 1891 passed by a Democratic legislature, revised and reconstructed the existing methods of taxation in such a way as greatly to increase the burdens of the taxpayer.² From the point of view of the agriculturists, a weakness of the law was said to consist in the fact that the farmer had to pay a tax upon value represented while the money lender got credit for his indebtedness. In other words, the farmers were taxed upon what they owed while the other classes were not.¹ This increase of their taxes undoubtedly strengthened many in the People's party doctrine. It was said by many and hoped by the Republicans that the farmers would be greatly strengthened in their opposition to the Democrats because of the latter's passage of this law doubling assessments instead of a reform fee and salary bill, a particular pet of the Populists.²

AMALGAMATION AND ORGANIZATION

Up to this time the action of the People's party had been a matter of State and local concern. The first step toward the fusion of the various elements into a national organiza-

¹ These figures are taken from the *Forty-first Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture* for 1890, pp. 279-293.

² The main features of this law were four: (1) A tax of 6c on each \$100 worth of property for the Benevolent Institution Fund in addition to the 12c tax rate. (2) A thorough revision and reconstruction of the law regulating assessment and collection of taxes. (3) The creation of a permanent Board of State Tax Commissioners. (4) Special provision for the taxation of express, Pullman, telegraph and telephone companies. *Appleton's Annual Encyclopaedia*, 1891, p. 379.

¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, May 30, 1892.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, July 29, 1891.

tion was the National Union Conference held at Cincinnati, May 19, 1891.³ Kansas, Indiana and Ohio naturally sent

³ This National Union Conference, as it was called, was a gathering of all the politico-reform forces of the country for the purpose of founding a third party. The germ of the meeting was the agitation carried on by the Kansas delegates at the Ocala conference of the Farmers' Alliance Dec. 4, 1890, for a meeting at Cincinnati early in the year 1891 of all the alliances and industrial unions in the country who stood by the St. Louis platform to consider a third party movement. It was recommended at that time that the name of the party be called the "National Union Party of America" (*Indianapolis Journal*, Dec. 5, 1890). At the Cincinnati meeting in the delegation from Kansas seven different organizations were represented. They were: The Farmers' Alliance, The Citizens' Alliance, The People's party, The Knights of Labor, The National Industrial Alliance, The Anti-Monopoly party, The Single-Tax Men (*Indianapolis Sentinel*, May 19, 1891). There were almost 1500 delegates present representing thirty-two states in the Union and two territories (W. A. Peffer, *The Farmer's Side*, p. 160). However, the apathy of the South was noticeable and their delegates were few.

Senator W. A. Peffer, of Kansas, was chosen permanent chairman of the convention, and Ignatius Donnelly, of Minnesota, chairman of the committee on resolutions. Other prominent personalities in the convention were, T. V. Powderly, head of the Knights of Labor; General J. B. Weaver, a veteran Greenbacker and the party's destined candidate for president; "Sockless" Jerry Simpson, of Kansas; George W. Washburn, President of the New England Industrial Alliance; Mason Greene, of Boston, the personal representative of Edward Bellamy and his theories; Captain C. A. Powers, of Terre Haute, and Miss Helen M. Gougar, also of Indiana.

The work of the convention fell mainly under two heads, the selection of a national committee and the drafting of a set of resolutions. H. E. Taubeneck, of Illinois, was elected chairman of the national executive committee, which consisted of three members, from each state. (*Indianapolis Journal*, May 31, 1891.)

In a platform dealing with numerous and varied subjects, the chief planks were the following: (1) "Crystallization of the political reform forces of the country into the 'People's party of the United States of America.'" (2) Endorsement of the platforms adopted at St. Louis in 1889; at Ocala, Florida, in 1890; and at Omaha, Nebraska, in 1891. The demands set forth in the above mentioned platforms were then summarized: (a) The abolition of national banks as banks of issue, and the issuance by the government of legal tender treasury notes to take the place of bank notes, the treasury notes to be loaned at not more than 2% on farm products according to the sub-treasury plan. (b) Free and unlimited coinage of silver. (c) No alien ownership of land. (d) Just and equal taxation. (e) Economical administration of governmental revenues. (f) Imposition of a graduated income tax. (g) Government control of transportation and communication, in case of control proving ineffectual, complete ownership. (h) The election by direct vote of the people of the President, Vice-President, and United States senators.

In addition to the above a number of resolutions, not a part of the platform, were presented: That universal suffrage be recommended to the consideration of the States and Territories; that justice be done to ex-soldiers who were paid off in depreciated currency at the end of the war, by the issuance of legal tender treasury notes sufficient to make the pay of old soldiers on a par with coin; that the principle of the eight-hour day apply to all corporations employing labor.

In this way, by the naming of a national executive committee and the adoption of a set of resolutions, the People's party was launched into the sea of national politics.

the largest delegations to this convention, Kansas leading with 409. Indiana came second with 154 delegates. While Kansas undoubtedly dominated the convention, Indiana's influence was far from negligible. In the election of Mort C. Rankin, of Terre Haute, who had long been identified with the farmers' movement, as treasurer of the national executive committee, Indiana was represented in a responsible position. The three national committeemen from Indiana were C. A. Powers, of Terre Haute; Leroy Templeton, of Boswell, and J. D. Comstock.¹

Organization of the party more than what already existed was effected within the State at a meeting held July 30, in Indianapolis. About 150 members of the party attended, representing forty-seven counties and twelve out of the thirteen congressional districts.² The call was issued by J. H. Allen, of Terre Haute, chairman of the State central committee, organized at the State convention held the previous year. T. W. Force, of Shoals, president of the State Alliance, presided. The plan of organization contemplated a general sub-State committee composed of three men from each county, a State executive committee to be selected by this larger State committee and a State central committee of three men from each congressional district. It will be noticed that this is a triple organization throughout compared with the usual plan. The duties of the members of the sub-State committee were to look after the interests of the party in their respective localities. Leroy Templeton, of Benton county, was elected chairman of the State central committee, Dr. H. W. Taylor, of Anderson, secretary, and Joshua Strange, of Arcana, Grant county, treasurer.¹

Before the conference adjourned arrangements were made for the removal of the *American Nonconformist*, a People's party paper, edited by L. Vincent, from Winfield, Kansas, to Indianapolis. This was on condition that 5,000 paid subscribers be guaranteed. The *Nonconformist*, thus introduced into Indiana, became later the most important Populist organ of the State.

¹ Indianapolis *Journal*, May 21, 1891.

² Indianapolis *Sentinel*, July 31, 1891.

In November a further step was taken toward harmonizing the various farmer elements into a third party on the occasion of the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Farmers' Alliance at Indianapolis. Animated by a common antipathy to Cleveland, delegates were present from all parts of the country. Although the convention thus partook of a national, not a State character, the fact that Indianapolis was chosen as a city in a favorable section possesses some significance. Eight industrial organizations were represented. The sounding of the Alliance as to its attitude toward the formation of a third party was the real purpose of the meeting.¹

The events which took place on November 16 to 20 were varied and complicated. Besides the Alliance council, including the F. M. B. A., the Grange, and other farmers' organizations, two other bodies, whose deliberations were interwoven with those of the Alliance, met at the same time. These two bodies were the executive committee of the People's party and the executive committee of what was known as the Confederated Industrial Union. This latter organization had its origin at the Ocala meeting when the Alliance invited farmer and labor organizations to send delegates to a conference at Washington, D. C. At this Washington conference an executive committee consisting of five members from each of six organizations was appointed which met November 19 in Indianapolis three days after the first coming together of the Supreme Council. Its functions were to decide on the place of meeting and the apportionment of delegates to a national convention for the nomination of President and Vice-President to be held on February 22, 1892.²

The executive committee of the People's party was on hand throughout the deliberations of the council working in the interests of the third party movement. Throughout the deliberations the case of a third party was a strong one. Most

¹ At the present writing (1917) Mr. Strange resides at Marion. He is connected officially with Farmers' National Congress, U. S. A.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 16, 1891.

² The plans in regard to this meeting were afterwards changed. Because of the decision to hold the nominating convention later in the year the committee meeting in February decided merely on the general plan of representation. *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 20, 1891.

of the delegates shared the view that only by the formation of a third party could the objects of the Alliance be achieved. It had tried to get the old parties to take up its ideas and failed. Independent political action was the next logical step. Practically all of the opposition to a third party came from the Southern delegates. In their view the dissolution of the Alliance in case it entered the political field was inevitable.¹

It was freely alleged, in view of the busy and excited meetings at the Hotel English, that the executive committee of the People's party was scheming to swallow both the F. M. B. A. and the Alliance.² In the deliberations of the Alliance proper, the attitude toward a third party was shown by the fact that when Jerry Simpson, of Kansas—"Sockless" Jerry, one of the best informed leaders in the movement—introduced a resolution instructing Alliance congressmen to keep out of party caucuses at Washington during the winter, the motion was carried with enthusiasm. The Alliance Congressmen at this time numbered fourteen—thirteen representatives and one senator.¹

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to give a detailed account of the proceedings of the various committees, councils, and other organizations. It will be sufficient to give merely the results of the convention.

In the first place the definite inauguration of a third party backed by various farmers' organizations was made an assured fact. No doubt existed anywhere that a ticket would not be gotten out before June, 1892, with Leonidas L. Polk, of North Carolina, national president of the Alliance, heading it.² The candidates of the next year were to enter the field with the pledged support of the Farmers' Alliance, the Industrial Union, and the F. M. B. A. In the second place, the work of the Indianapolis convention brought about a split between the anti-sub-treasury wing and the main body of the Alliance, resulting in the issuance of a call by the bolters for a new Alliance to be organized at Memphis, Tennessee, in December. The sub-treasury wing amalgamated with the Peo-

¹ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Nov. 16, 1891.

² Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Nov. 18, 1891.

¹ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, June 20, 1890.

² Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Nov. 21, 1891.

ple's party, thus committing that party to the land loan and farmers' credit plan.³ Furthermore, the meeting brought about practical amalgamation between the Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union and the F. M. B. A., the two most powerful agrarian organizations.¹ The latter order toward the close of the conference revised its constitution before adjourning. Among other changes the sub-treasury plank in its platform was modified so as to have the same purport as a similar plank in the Ocala platform. The general sentiment seemed to be against fusion with the third party until after the February meeting.²

THE HIGH-WATER MARK OF POPULISM—THE YEAR 1892

With definiteness and a background given to a national People's party by the three great conventions, viz.: The Confederated Industrial Conference at St. Louis in 1889; the National Union Conference at Cincinnati in May, 1891, and the Supreme Council of the Alliance at Indianapolis in November, 1891, the members of the party in Indiana began the campaign of 1892 with confidence and enthusiasm. The State-wide activity of the "Populists," as they had now come to be called, was of much the same nature as in 1890 and 1891. However, there were the additional factors of greater solidarity of organization and of the excitement of a presidential year. The chronic Prohibition ailment was still giving trouble. In most of the counties there was no hope of the two parties coming together. In a few instances, however, fusion occurred, as at Marion, where it was reported that the respective leaders of the People's and Prohibition parties agreed to unite their forces in the county campaign.¹ At Vincennes in April a mass convention was held by members of the People's party for the nomination of a city ticket. It was said that a majority of the convention had been Democrats.² At a mass convention held at Newcastle, May 21, for the nomination of

³ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Nov. 21, 1891.

¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 22, 1891.

² *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Nov. 21, 1891.

¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, March 28, 1892.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, April 5, 1892.

county officers, a full ticket was put out, consisting of nominees from the Democratic and Prohibitionist parties and the Alliance.³ In Jasper county a county ticket was nominated consisting mostly, it was said, of Democrats.

The State convention of the People's party met on May 27 at Masonic Hall, Indianapolis.⁴ At this time the party had organizations in two-thirds of the counties. Seventy-two counties of the State had representatives in the convention. Samuel W. Williams, of Knox county, "Telephone Sam," so named because of his being the author of a telephone law passed by the legislature of 1885,—was elected temporary chairman, and W. W. Prigg,¹ of Henry county, was made secretary.

The preamble of the platform read as follows:

In view of the great social, industrial and economic revolution now dawning on the civilized world and the new and living issues confronting the American people, and recognizing that in all ages and in all civilizations the great middle class has been the bulwark of civil liberty . . . the People's party believes the time has arrived for a crystallization of the reform forces of our State. Therefore, we invite all persons who are desirous of bettering their condition to join with us in eradicating the evils which are now so rapidly destroying the body politic.

On the subject of finance the platform continued:

We demand a national currency, safe, sound and flexible, issued by the general government only, a full legal tender for all debts, public and private, and that without the use of banking corporations; a just, equitable and efficient means of distributing it direct to the people at a tax not to exceed two per cent. to be provided as set forth in the sub-treasury plan of the Farmers' Alliance, or some better system; also by payments in discharge of its obligations for public improvements.

In the advocacy of the sub-treasury plan is seen the influence of the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Farmers' Alliance at Indianapolis the previous November. Although

³ According to the *Indianapolis Journal*, four of these candidates were Democrats, three were Prohibitionists and three Alliance men. *Indianapolis Journal*, May 22, 1892.

⁴ At the same time there was a meeting of the judicial and executive boards of the Farmers' Alliance, no doubt for the purpose of coming to some understanding with the third party. *Indianapolis Sentinel*, May 27, 1892.

¹ Resides at present (1917) at St. Mary's, Ohio.

formulated at the Ocala convention in 1890, the plan did not figure in the farmers' demands in their two State conventions in 1890.

The sub-treasury plan was one of the most striking and ill-fated of the farmers' demands. It is said to have been originated by C. A. Macune, the editor of the *National Economist*.¹ Broadly speaking, it is an extension of the familiar principle of borrowing money on warehouse receipts. The plan provided for the storing of grain in local government warehouses, the produce to be used as security for the loaning of paper money by the government to the farmers at a low rate of interest. One or two per cent. was the usual rate advocated. The money was to be loaned up to 80 per cent. of the market value of the grain.

The purpose of the plan as set forth by its advocates was to provide a safe, certain, and efficient method of giving a flexibility to the volume of money which would exactly equal the flexibility or variations in demand. That is, it was hoped that the plan if put into operation would secure a uniformity of price on the basis of the high prices prevailing during the summer months. The theory was that as the products of the farm were put on the market, instead of money being absorbed from other channels to move them, the marketings of the crops would be met by an issue of money from the government. In this way the supply of money would always exactly equal the demand, stringencies in the money market would be avoided and prices would be kept uniform.¹

A bill embodying the features outlined above was introduced in 1892 in congress. In the report of the committee of Ways and Means a number of arguments were brought forward in opposition to the scheme. It was pointed out that if the market value of the grain after storing fell below eighty per cent. of its original value the government would lose. The number of federal officers would be greatly increased, it was said, and the jurisdiction of the federal courts augmented to the oppression of the people. Also, it was urged, the plan would encourage speculation. Thousands of dollars worth of wheat could be carried at a low rate of interest with a com-

¹ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Nov. 23, 1891.

¹ *Appleton's Annual Encyclopaedia*, 1890, p. 300.

paratively small amount of cash. Finally, it was a violation of the constitution in that it was class legislation: persons with wheat could get money from the government at a low rate of interest and loan it to others at a higher rate.²

In the opinion of many the sub-treasury plan was unsound. In the form in which the idea first took shape no doubt this is true. Yet it aimed to remedy a real weakness in our rural credits system—a weakness recognized and remedied twenty-five years later by the Farm Loan and Credits Act of 1916.

Another plank in the platform demanded free and unlimited coinage of silver and denounced the efforts of President Harrison in calling an international monetary conference to assist the United States in fixing a value for silver. In addition, the increase of the circulating medium to \$50 per capita, a graduated income tax, and postal savings banks were demanded.

In regard to the subject of transportation and communication, government ownership and operation of railroads, the telegraph, and the telephone were advocated. At that time considered among the wildest dreams of the Populists, these demands are now largely favored by public opinion.

With reference to land the platform declared:

The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of the people and should not be monopolized for speculative purposes; alien ownership of land should be prohibited; all land now held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs, and all lands now owned by aliens should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only.

Among the State demands, equal representation of political parties on election boards, just redistricting of the State, valuation of property for taxation according to net receipts derived therefrom, popular election of county superintendents, abolition of the office of county assessor, listing of property for taxation at a fair cash value and exemption of property holders from bona-fide indebtedness, were demanded.

Besides the planks in the platform proper the following

² *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 6, 1892.

demands were set forth in a number of resolutions: the initiative and referendum, woman's suffrage and the reduction of intemperance by a proper distribution of wealth.¹ With better economic justice, reasoned the Populists, there would be better morals.

A minority report was also brought forward by the committee on resolutions which agreed with the majority report on everything but the subject of intemperance. The minority report unequivocally demanded the abolition of the liquor traffic. The suggested plank was rejected and the majority report adopted by a vote of 574 to 164.²

It will be observed that the platform of this convention was silent in regard to the tariff and the trusts. The former never at any time occupied more than a subordinate place in the People's party program; the latter, particularly in the later history of the party, became a leading issue. According to the Indianapolis *Sentinel* the declarations of the platform were "socialistic."³

The convention also nominated a full State ticket headed by Leroy Templeton, of Boswell, Benton county, a wealthy farmer and stock-raiser. Templeton, it will be remembered, had been nominated by the party in 1890 for secretary of State, but after having been nominated for congress by the Democrats and Independents of the Ninth district he had withdrawn his name.

The following is the remainder of the ticket:

Lieutenant-Governor, J. A. Houser, of Marion county, physician; Secretary of State, Jesse L. Hobson, of Wabash county, farmer; Auditor of State, Louis C. Kasten, of Allen county, mechanic; Treasurer of State, Townsend Cope, of Jennings county, farmer; Attorney-General, D. H. Fernandes, of Madison county; Superintendent of Public Instruction, J. H. Allen, of Vigo county; State Statistician, C. H. Bliss, of Howard county, editor of a Populist paper; Reporter of the Supreme Court, W. H. Dewey, of Washington county, mechanic.

These were the more important nominations. Besides

¹ Indianapolis *Journal*, May 28, 1892.

² Indianapolis *Journal*, May 28, 1892.

³ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, May 28, 1892.

these, names were also placed in nomination for Supreme and Appellate Judges.²

The work of the convention included also the selection of a new State central committee, consisting of one member from each congressional district. This, it will be noted, was an abandonment of the arrangement inaugurated in 1890 whereby there were three members from each district. Joshua Strange, of Arcana, Grant county, was made chairman of the new committee, with G. C. Stahl, of Delaware county, as secretary, and L. M. Johnson, of Ripley county, treasurer.

It was in the course of the ensuing campaign that the members of the People's party began to be called "Populists." As usual in such cases, the term at first applied in derision came to be adopted by the members themselves until the name "Populist party" became official. Since the birth of the party in 1890 it had been consistently called the People's party. The word "Populist" so far as the writer has been able to learn, was unknown up until the summer of 1892. At first the term took the form of "Populite." This, however, whether by the rules of euphony, or for some other reason, never caught the popular fancy and "Populist" came to be the accepted word.

The State campaign was naturally over-shadowed by the national campaign. In this, as in national politics, free silver was coming to be more and more the dominant issue. Both old parties made strenuous efforts to keep the struggle confined to the old rallying cry of the tariff. Hence in regard to the money question they adopted straddling and evasive platforms.¹ The Republicans, entrenched in the sound-money East, were sincerely and strongly opposed to the free silver "populistic" doctrines of the South and West. Among the Democrats, defection to the new ideas was increasing. Cleveland, by his letter in 1892 on free coinage of silver alienated a great many Democrats and disappointed more.² Events were shaping themselves toward Bryanism and the political jumble of 1896.

The platform put out by the Populist national convention at Omaha on July 2 was mainly along the lines of the na-

² Indianapolis *Sentinel*, May 28, 1892.

¹ J. A. Woodburn, *Political Parties and Party Problems*, 161, 162.

² J. S. Bassett, *Short History of the United States*, 750.

tional demands formulated by the Indiana State convention in May.³

Some idea of the state of the country as seen by the Populists may be gained from the preamble of the national platform:

The conditions which surround us justify our co-operation. We meet in the midst of a Nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot box, the legislatures, congress and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized. . . . The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled; public opinion silenced; business prostrated; our homes covered with mortgages; labor impoverished and the land concentrating in the hands of the capitalists. The urban workmen are denied the right of organization for self-protection; imported pauperized labor beats down their wages; a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down, and they are rapidly degenerating into European conditions. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few. . . . From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed two great classes—tramps and millionaires.¹

³ The following is an outline of the platform as adopted by the National Convention:

I. Money.

(1) Issuance of a national flexible currency direct to the people as set forth in the sub-treasury plan of the Farmers' Alliance.

(2) Free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1.

(3) Increase of the circulating medium to \$50 per capita.

(4) A graduated income tax.

(5) Economical State and national administrations.

(6) Postal savings banks.

II. Transportation and Communication.

(1) Government ownership and operation of railroads and government operation of the telephone and telegraph in the interest of the people.

III. Land.

(1) No alien ownership or speculative monopoly of land. Reclamation by the government of all land owned by the railroads in excess of their actual needs.

A number of resolutions were also adopted in addition to the platform proper.

(1) That there should be a free ballot and a fair count through the adoption of the Australian ballot.

(2) That the revenue from an income tax should be applied to relieve domestic taxation.

(3) That the contract labor and immigration laws should be repealed.

(4) That the universal eight-hour day should be put into effect.

(5) That the initiative and referendum should be established.

(6) That the President and Vice-President should be elected for one term only, and the senators by direct vote.

The convention nominated for President, James B. Weaver, of Iowa, an old radical, and the presidential candidate of the Greenbackers in 1880; for Vice-President, James G. Field, of Virginia.

¹ The literary craftsman of this famous preamble was Ignatius Donnelly.

The preamble continued in the same melancholy vein, reciting the issue of gold-bearing bonds, the demonetization of silver, and the efforts of the two old parties to confine the issues of the campaign to the tariff, as evidence of gross injustice being perpetrated upon the people.

The choice of the convention, could it have had its way, was the honored jurist, Walter Q. Gresham,¹ whose presidential boom was cut short only by his own declination. Lionized by the convention from the start, he was the most available man the People's party had and the one most likely to harmonize the different factions. Colonel L. L. Polk, of North Carolina, the national president of the Farmers' Alliance, had recently died. With both Gresham and Polk eliminated the mantle fell upon General James B. Weaver, a veteran Greenbacker, who was ultimately the nominee of the convention.

Members of the Indiana delegation figured most prominently in connection with the efforts put forth to induce Judge Gresham to accept the nomination. In the early part of the proceedings, a caucus was held, consisting of the delegations from Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa to take steps toward procuring the Judge's consent. A delegation consisting of A. J. Streeter, of Illinois; Judge Orr, of Colorado, and Leroy Templeton, an intimate friend of Gresham, was finally dispatched to Chicago.¹ For a time it seemed that partial success had attended their efforts when H. E. Taubeneck, of Illinois, chairman of the national committee, nearly stampeded the convention to Gresham the next day by reading a telegram from J. A. Houser signifying Gresham's conditional acceptance of the nomination.² Later information from Gresham himself laid at rest, once and for all, the hopes of his supporters, and the Indiana delegation, after having been passed by once in the roll call, broke for Weaver.³

¹ Judge Gresham, a native of Indiana, born near Corydon, had been a major general in the Civil War. After the war he settled down as a lawyer, and rose rapidly in his profession until he secured the appointment as judge in one of the federal circuit courts. It was said he was converted to the doctrines of the People's party by reading Ignatius Donnelly's political novel, *Caesar's Column*.

² *Indianapolis Journal*, July 4, 1892.

³ Houser, it will be remembered, was the candidate of the People's party in Indiana for lieutenant governor. He was a newspaper writer and the reputed author of the work, *Is Marriage a Failure?* *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 5, 1892.

⁴ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 5, 1892.

The Indiana members of the national committee, which consisted of three members from each State, were M. C. Rankin, of Terre Haute; C. A. Robinson, of Greenfield, and Fraser Thomas.

The campaign in Indiana was carried on in much the same way as in 1890. Rallies, barbecues, and picnics were the order of the day. The opening shot in the campaign was fired on July 20, at a monster rally at Vincennes when General J. B. Weaver spoke to an immense audience. Another speaker was Mort C. Rankin, of Terre Haute.

After the election, November 8, it was found that Leroy Templeton, the head of the ticket, had received 22,000 votes, about 4 per cent. of the total vote cast, and an increase of 10,600 over the vote cast in 1890.¹

THE YEAR 1894

After the more or less exciting presidential campaign of 1892, the political pot became calm again. Consequently 1893 brought few new developments in the People's party. The new party had made greater inroads into the Democratic than into the Republican camp in the elections of 1892, but while the large Democratic majorities in the South were safe against such losses, the narrower Republican margins in the North were in many cases wiped out. An unexpected Democratic victory was the result, perhaps not altogether due to the Populists. At any rate the free silver idea was gaining ground and populist doctrines were becoming more respectable. The financial panic of 1893, whether or not brought on by the disasters of the Cleveland administration, intensified the economic distress of the time. Low prices continued. These and other conditions of the time continued to provide the Populists with ample ground upon which to base their grievances. Instead of abating, the waves of discontent were rising higher and higher.

In Indiana at this time harmony prevailed within the party. In January, 1894, at the call of Joshua Strange, chairman of the State central committee, there was a love feast of

¹ Report of the Secretary of State, *Documentary Journal*, 1892, Part I.

about thirty-five Populists at the Hotel English, Indianapolis. It was rumored that C. A. Robinson, president of the Indiana F. M. B. A., would object to the old plank in the platform favoring government ownership of railroads. This was denied by both Robinson and Strange.¹ At this meeting Strange gave it out as his opinion that the coming fight would be between the People's party and the Republicans.²

The convention for nominating a State ticket and drawing up a platform was held in Indianapolis on May 24. There was supposed to be one delegate from each township going to make up the roster, but actually only three or four hundred were present. It was understood that the candidates were to be distributed evenly throughout the State.¹

The platform contained the following planks:

The platform adopted by the Omaha nominating convention in 1892 was endorsed. It was demanded that the circulating medium be increased to \$50 per capita. Free coinage of silver at the ratio of sixteen to one, to be issued direct to the public was also demanded. Vigorous opposition to banks of issue, either State or national, and to interest bearing bonds was expressed and the Acts of 1873 and 1893,² were bitterly denounced. These two acts, it was said, had the effect through the setting up of the gold standard of reducing the laborers and producers of this country to the level of pauper labor in the Old World. The old demands of a national graduated income tax and the direct election of United States senators were reaffirmed.

The remainder of the platform was devoted to State issues.

The immediate repeal of the Metropolitan police law was asked for. This was a law passed by the legislature of 1893, which applied to cities between ten and thirty-five thousand population. By the terms of the law three police commissioners were to be appointed by the governor. These commissioners were to have complete control over the police in the cities coming within the scope of the law. The law was

¹ Indianapolis *News*, Jan. 4, 1894. Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Jan. 4, 1894.

² Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Jan. 4, 1894.

¹ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, May 22, 1894.

² The act repealing the Sherman Silver Purchasing Act.

aimed mainly to prevent political corruption in the appointment and removal of policemen. By its terms no policeman was to be removed henceforth on account of his political beliefs. The Populists objected to the law because, as they said, it interfered with local home rule.¹

Another plank, a natural demand for a third party to make, struck at that part of the election law which prohibited minority representation on election boards.

Further, a constitutional convention to revise the State constitution² was demanded, the changes contemplated being reform in the system of taxation, the initiative and referendum and the placing of the veto power of important laws in the hands of the people. The old demand made in the conventions of 1890 and again in 1892, that debtors should not be taxed on their bona-fide indebtedness, was reiterated. Moreover, it was demanded that debtors in paying their debts should pay in gold, silver or any lawful money without any previous discriminatory agreement. This was a blow at the "gold bugs" who it was charged conducted their transactions in gold at the expense of the poor.

In regard to labor, the Populists were explicit and reasonable. They declared against child labor and convict labor in competition with free workmen. According to their plan, convicts should be put to work building and improving public roads. They favored industrial arbitration, an employer's liability law and the reduction of working hours by legal enactment. They also advocated municipal ownership of public utilities and the construction of public works by the State and by communities.

General demands were a homestead law, an inheritance tax of five per cent on sums above \$2,000 for the benefit of the State sinking fund, more efficiency in the administration of the public school funds, and the conformation of the State naturalization laws to the national laws on that subject.¹

¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, December 1, 1894.

² The demand for a constitutional convention had been made by various minor parties, notably the Prohibitionists, for some time. The agitation has finally resulted in the act for a constitutional convention of September, 1917, the change in the basic law taking the form of a new constitution because of the difficulty of amending the old one.

¹ The idea here involved was that no foreigner be allowed to vote unless he was a naturalized citizen. As it was, the qualifications were merely one year's residence and declaration of intention to become a citizen.

There was also a resolution declaring for woman's suffrage and one expressing alarm over the liquor traffic. In doing away with the traffic, the initiative and referendum was urged as the best remedy. As usual, the party was guarded and equivocal in its expressions in regard to prohibition, no doubt through fear of being identified with the Prohibitionists.

The ticket put out by the convention was as follows:

Secretary of State, Dr. C. A. Robinson,¹ of Fountaintown; Auditor of State, Edgar A. Perkins, of Indianapolis; Treasurer of State, A. B. Keepert, of Logansport; Attorney-General, Silas M. Holcomb, of Tipton; Superintendent of Public Instruction, Capt. J. H. Allen, of Terre Haute; Clerk of the Supreme Court, J. Harry Montgomery, of Lawrence county; Statistician, William P. Smith, of Indianapolis; State Geologist, Edward Kindle, of Bloomington; Judge of Supreme Court in Fourth District, D. W. Chambers.

The high water mark of the independent Populist vote was reached on this ticket, Dr. C. A. Robinson, the candidate for secretary of State, receiving 29,388 votes, or five per cent of the total.²

(To be continued.)

¹ President of the Indiana F. M. B. A. At present, (1917) Riley impersonator and platform lecturer. Residence, Greenfield.

² The Populist percentage of the respective total votes for the election years from 1890 to 1900 are as follows: 1890 3 per cent, 1892 4 per cent, 1894 5 per cent, 1896 1.3 per cent, 1898 1+ per cent, 1900 1/5 per cent.